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Hsieh et al.

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(54) **SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICE AND METHOD OF MANUFACTURING SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICE**

(71) Applicant: **TAIWAN SEMICONDUCTOR MANUFACTURING COMPANY, LTD.**, Hsinchu (TW)

(72) Inventors: **Tung-Heng Hsieh**, Zhudong Town (TW); **Hui-Zhong Zhuang**, Kaohsiung (TW); **Chung-Te Lin**, Tainan (TW); **Ting-Wei Chiang**, New Taipei (TW); **Sheng-Hsiung Wang**, Zhubei (TW); **Li-Chun Tien**, Tainan (TW)

(73) Assignee: **Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, Ltd.**, Hsin-Chu (TW)

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H01L 23/535 (2006.01)
H01L 29/40 (2006.01)
H01L 21/768 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **H01L 23/535** (2013.01); **H01L 21/76895** (2013.01); **H01L 27/088** (2013.01); **H01L 29/401** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC H01L 21/32; H01L 27/00; H01L 23/535; H01L 27/088; H01L 29/401; H01L 21/76
USPC 438/259, 201, 299, 585, 275
See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner — Chuong A Luu

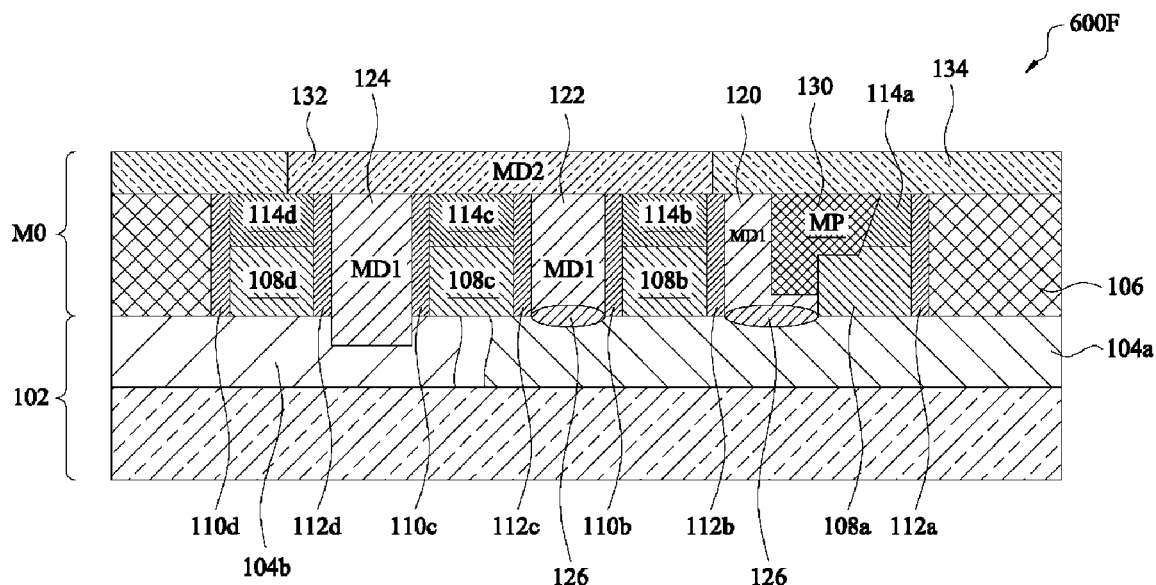
Assistant Examiner — Rodolfo Fortich

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Slater Matsil, LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A semiconductor device includes a substrate having an active region, a first gate structure over a top surface of the substrate, a second gate structure over the top surface of the substrate, a pair of first spacers on each sidewall of the first gate structure, a pair of second spacers on each sidewall of the second gate structure, an insulating layer over at least the first gate structure, a first conductive feature over the active region and a second conductive feature over the substrate. Further, the second gate structure is adjacent to the first gate structure and a top surface of the first conductive feature is coplanar with a top surface of the second conductive feature.

20 Claims, 12 Drawing Sheets



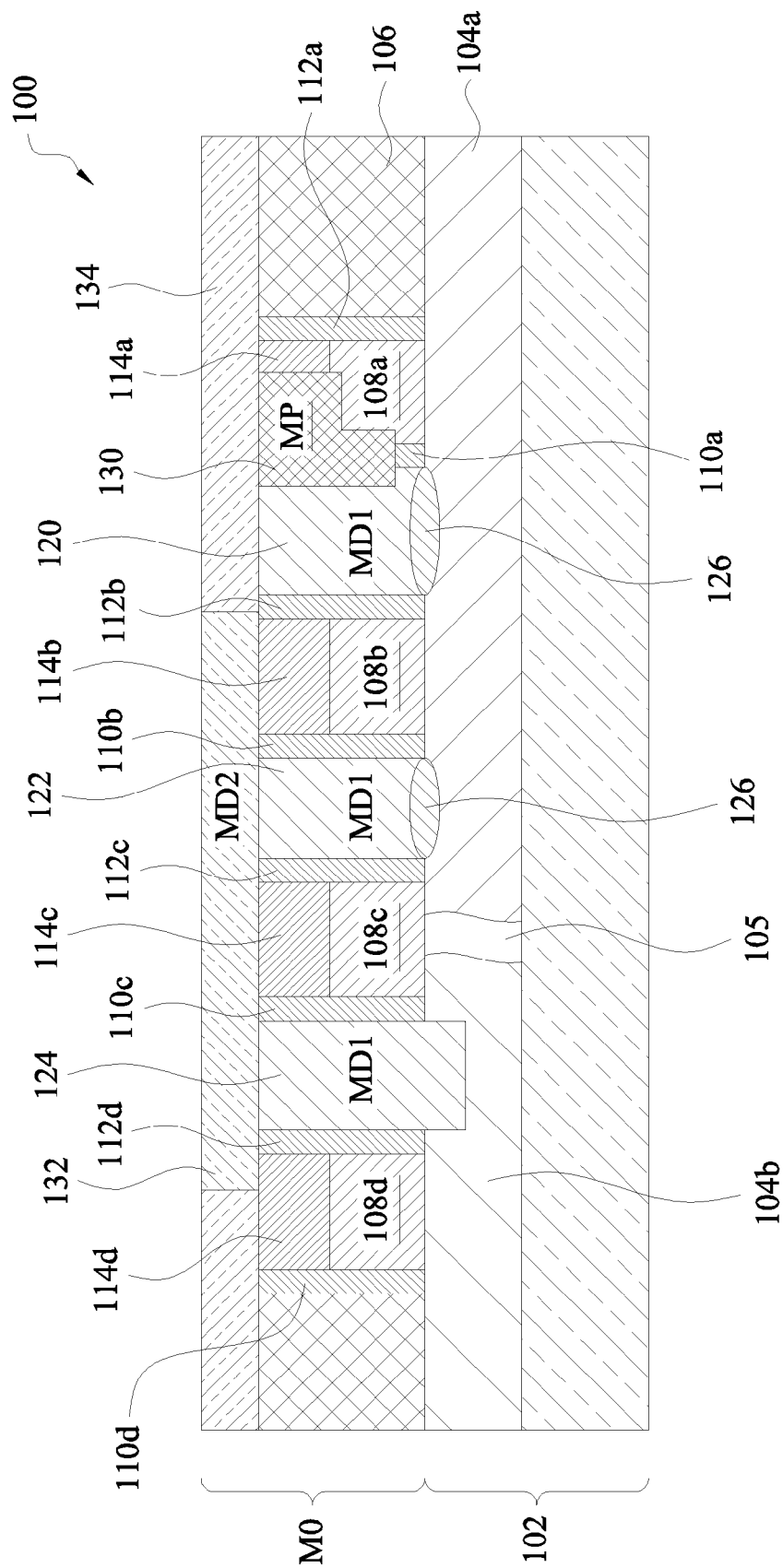


FIG. 1

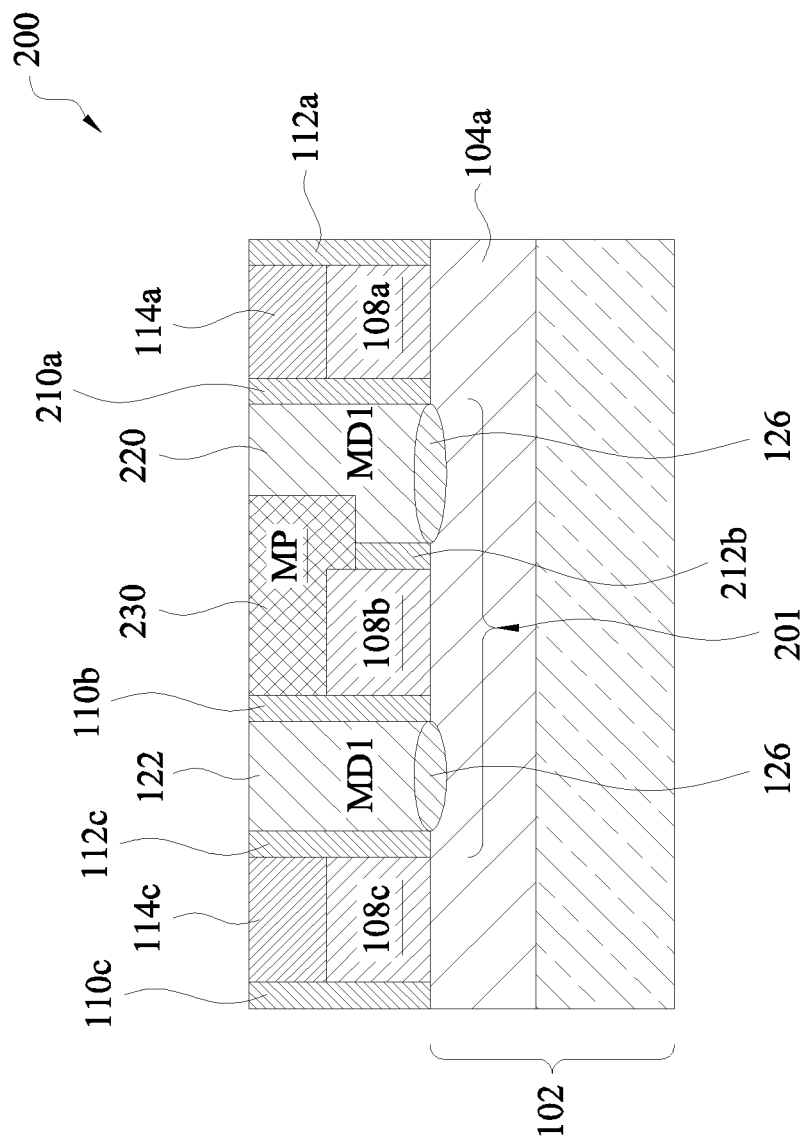


FIG. 2A

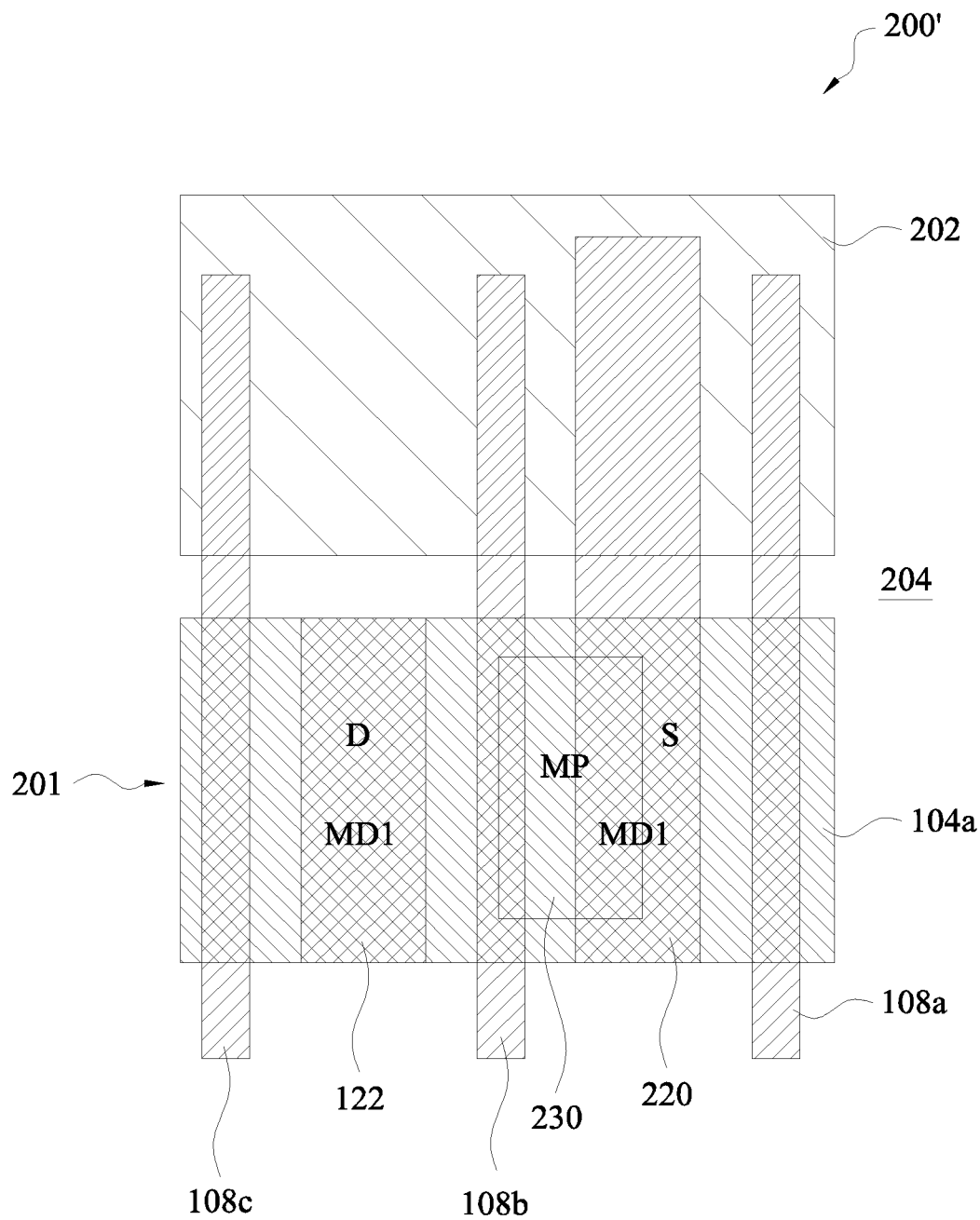


FIG. 2B

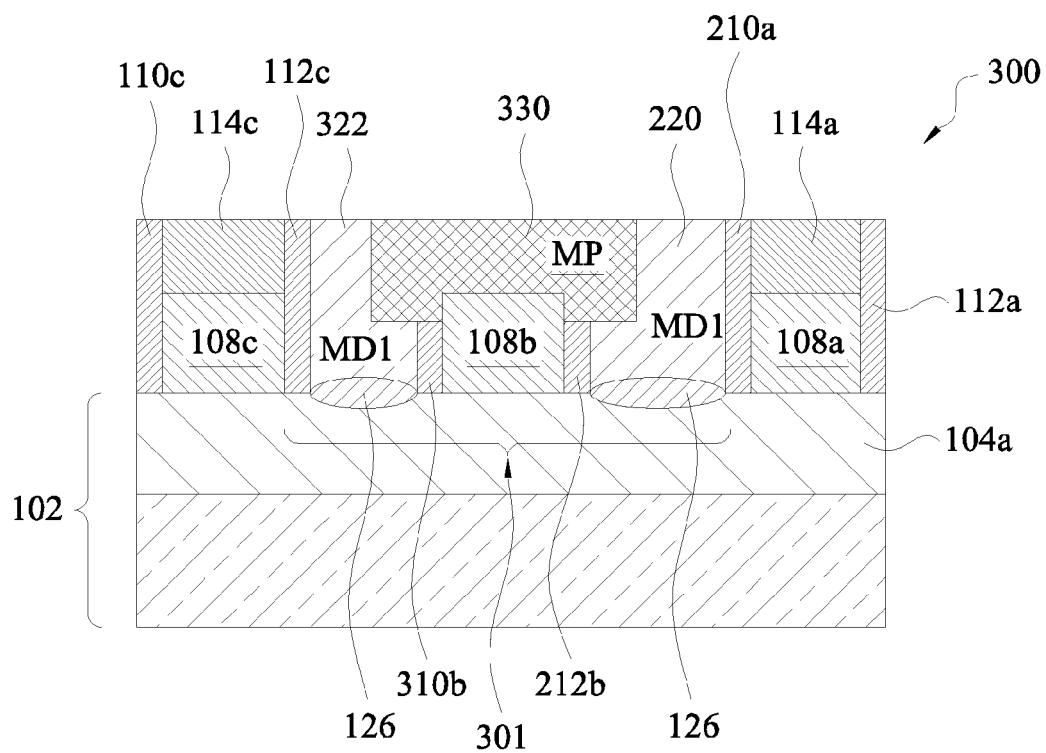


FIG. 3A

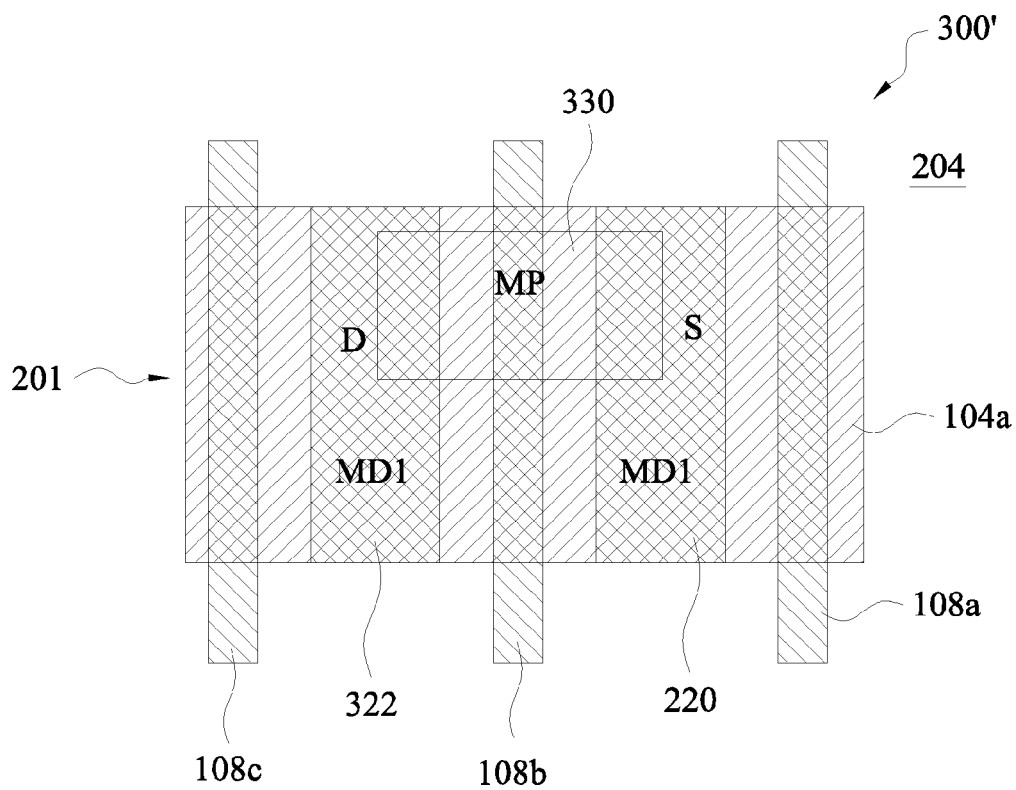


FIG. 3B

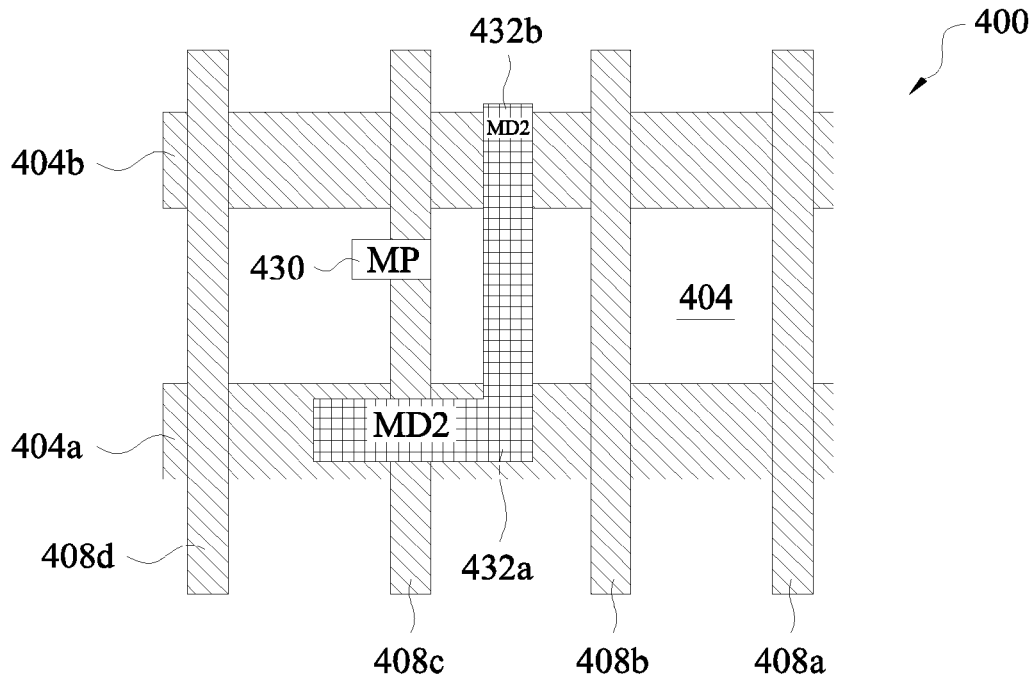


FIG. 4A

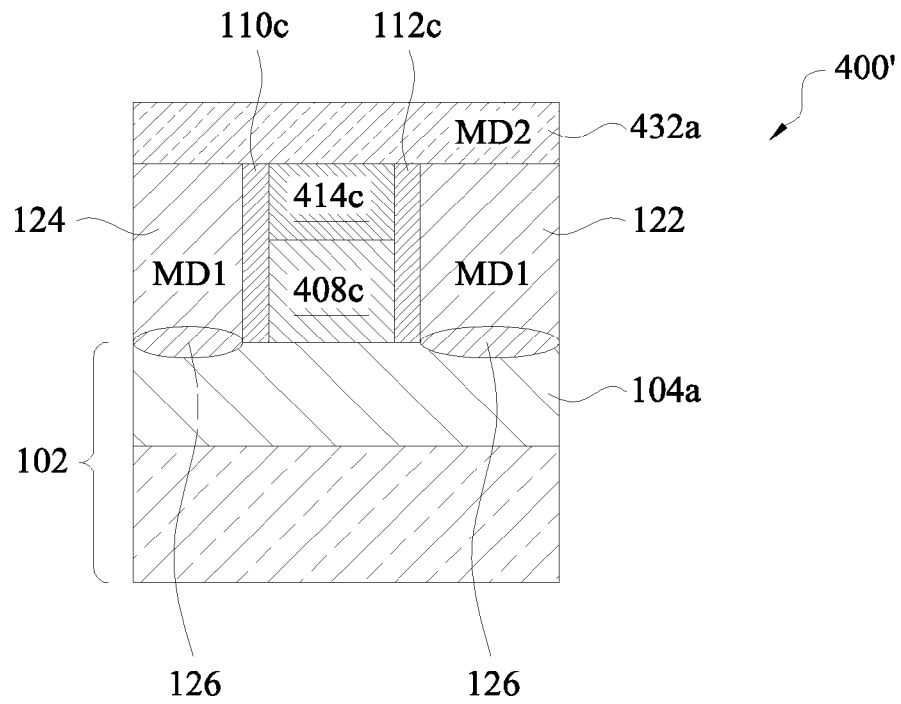


FIG. 4B

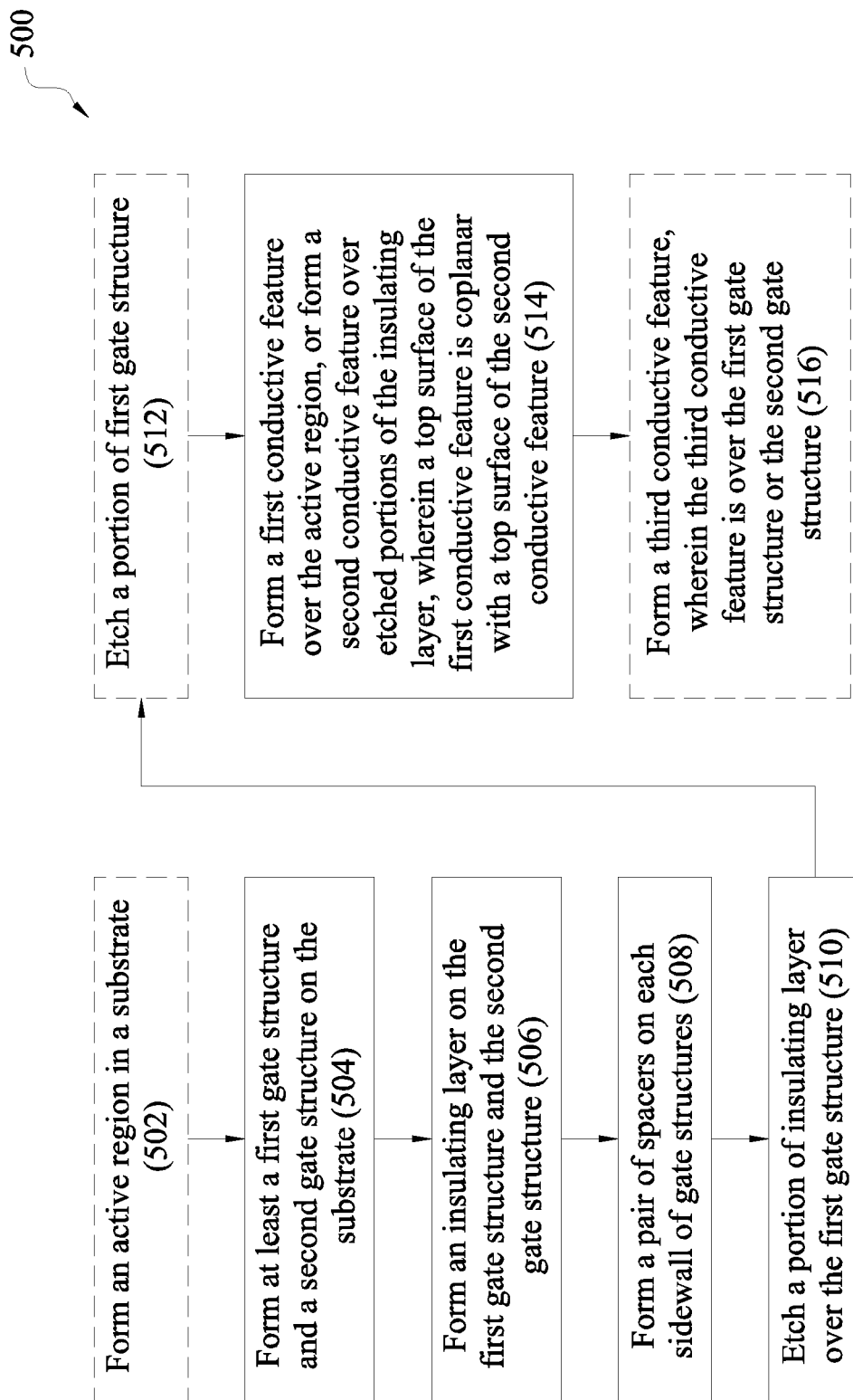


FIG. 5

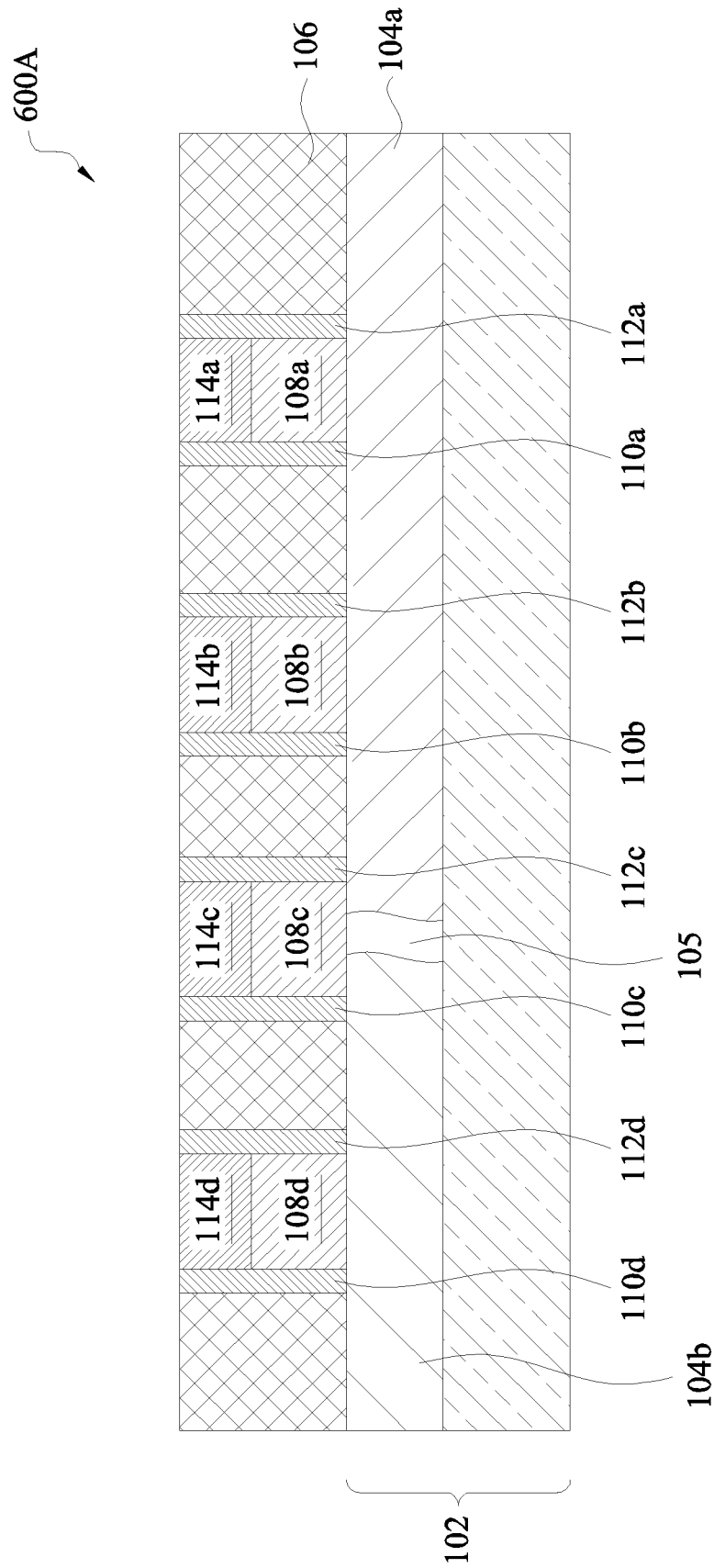


FIG. 6A

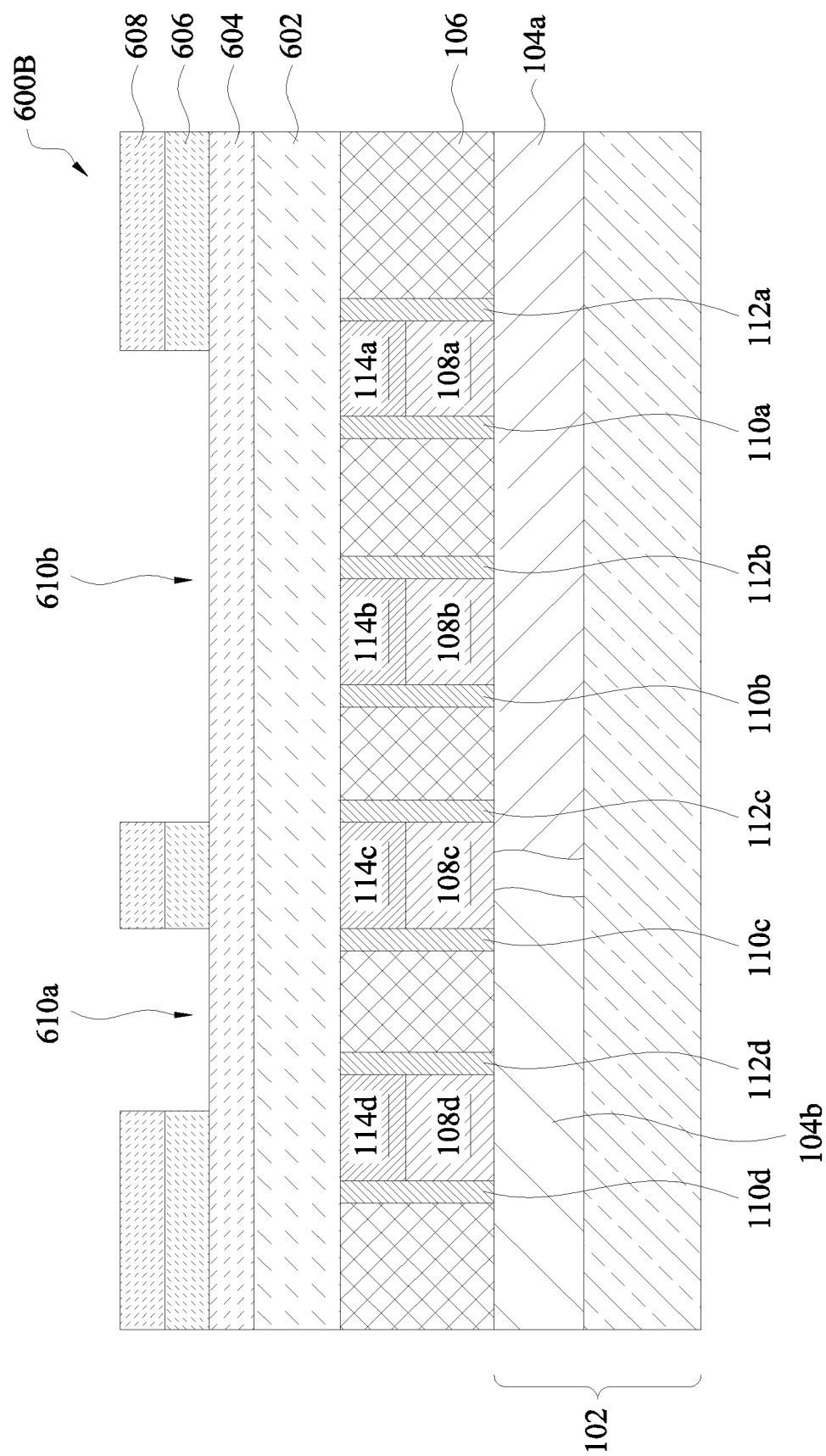


FIG. 6B

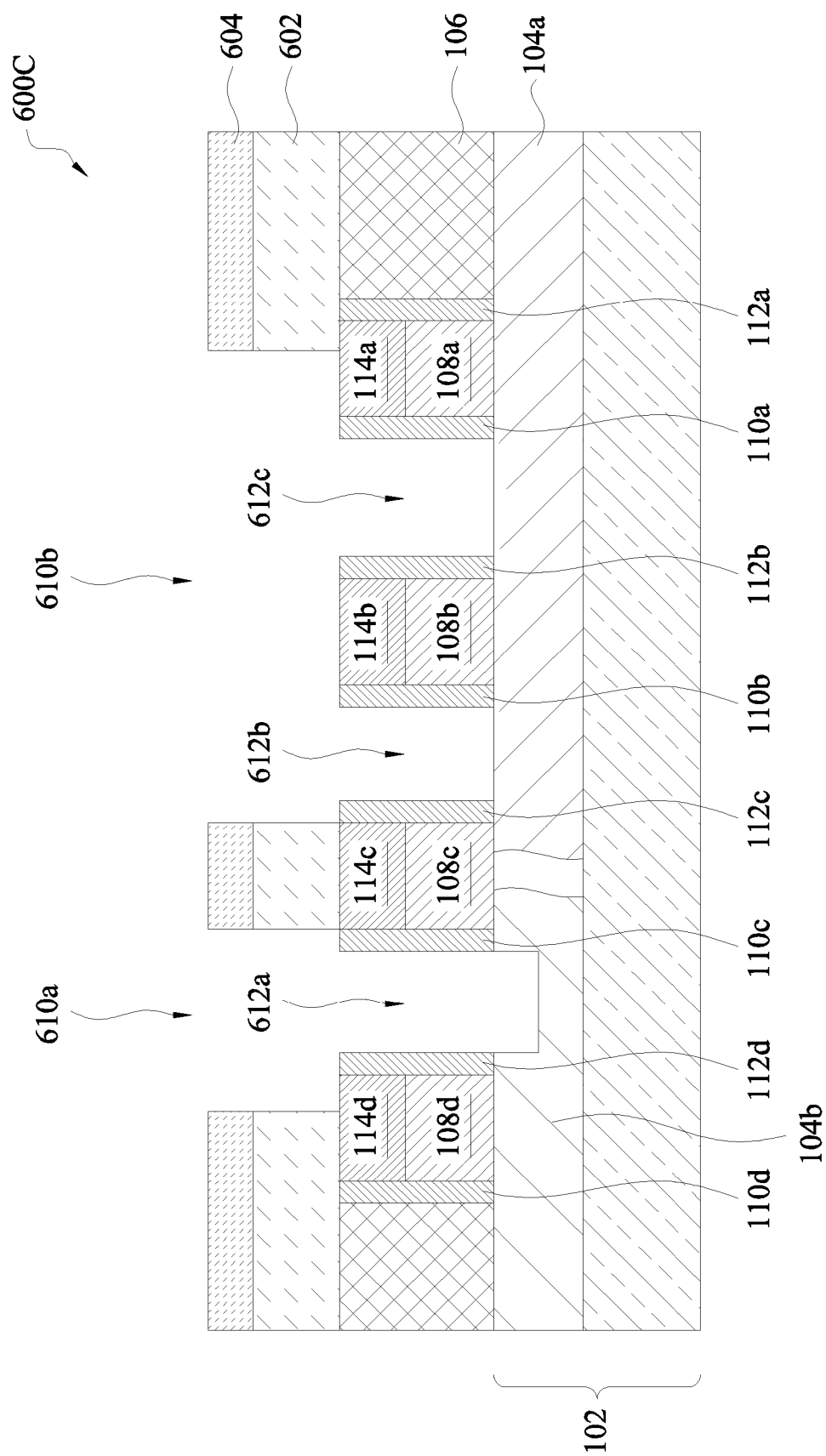


FIG. 6C

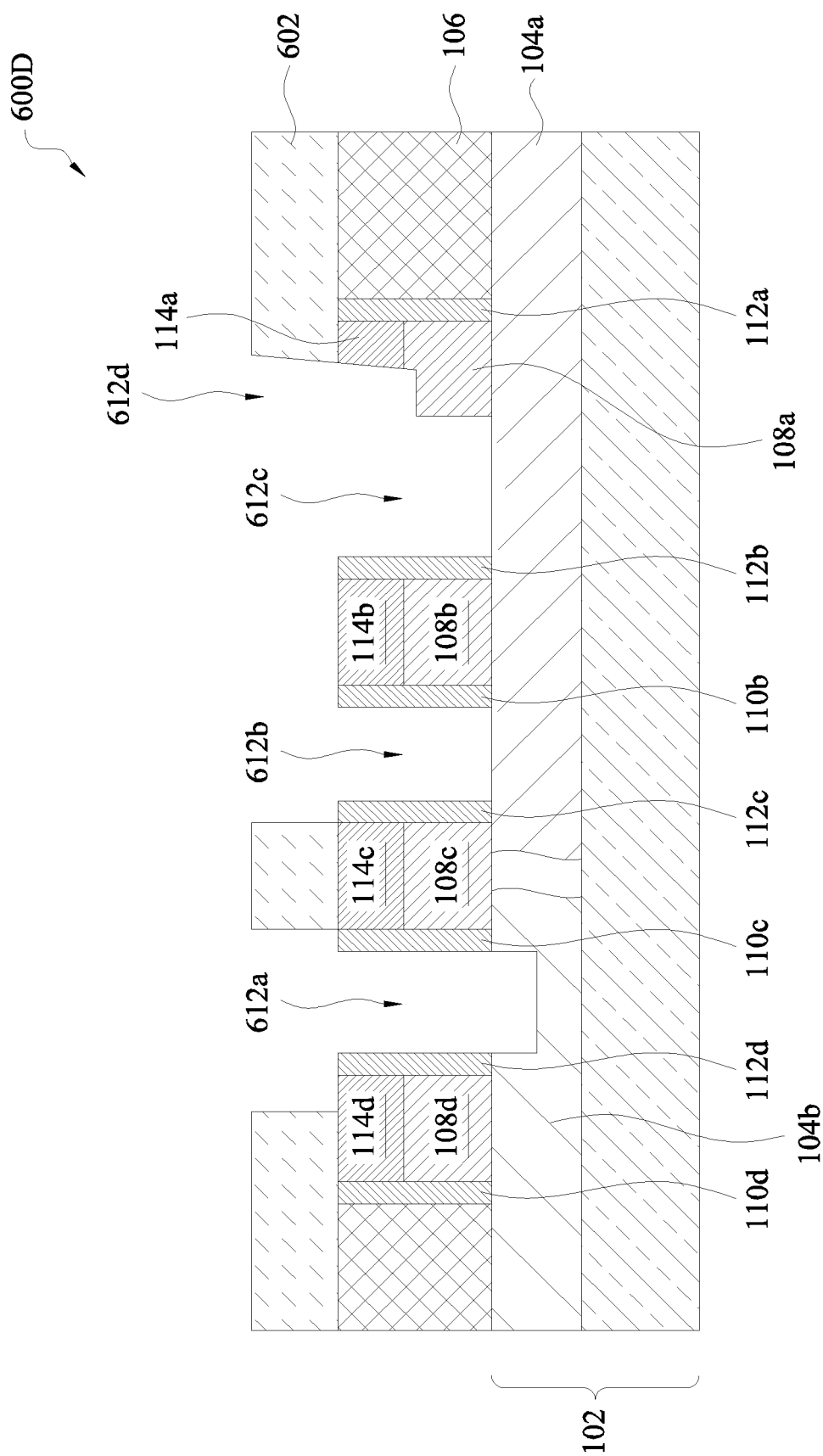


FIG. 6D

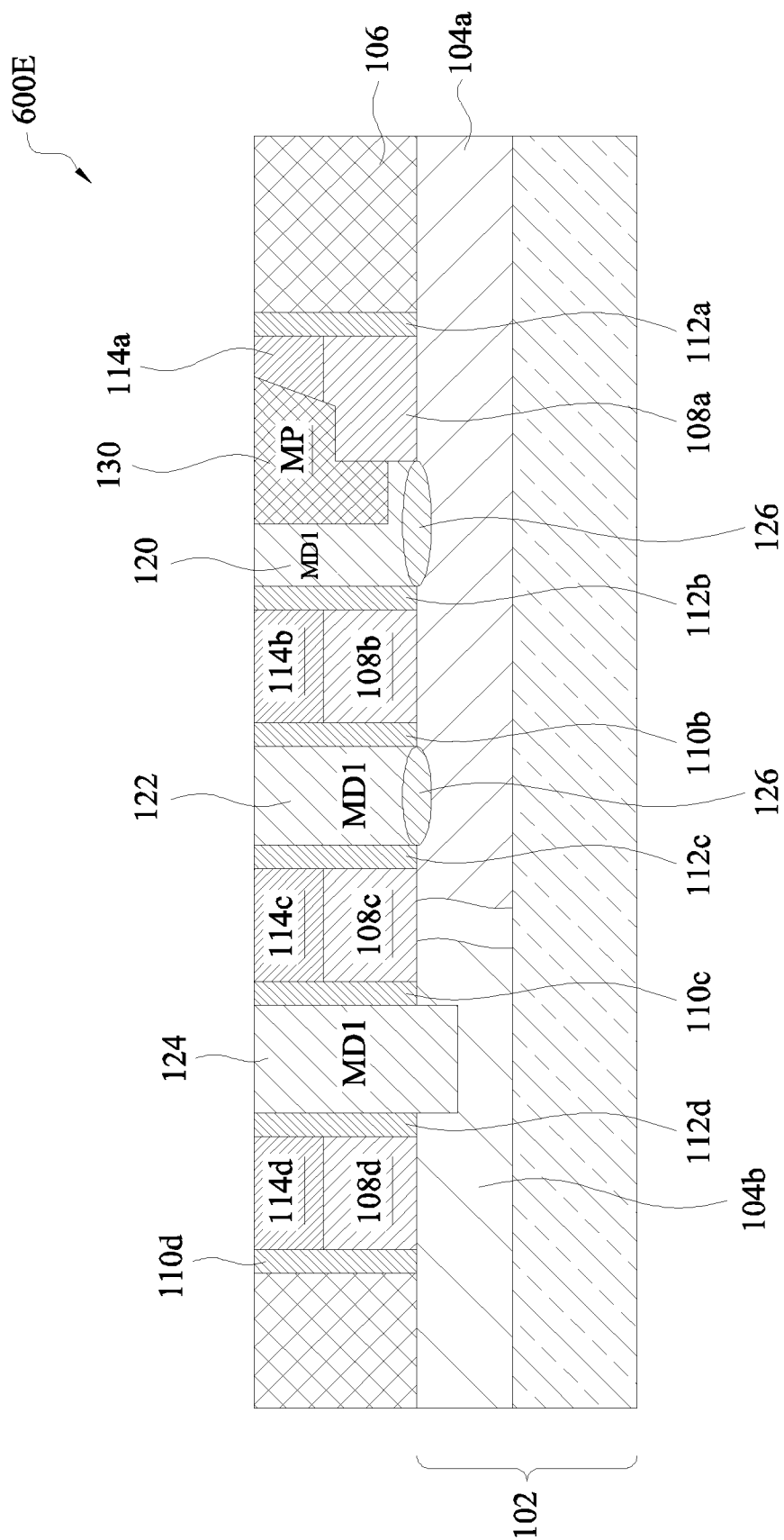


FIG. 6E

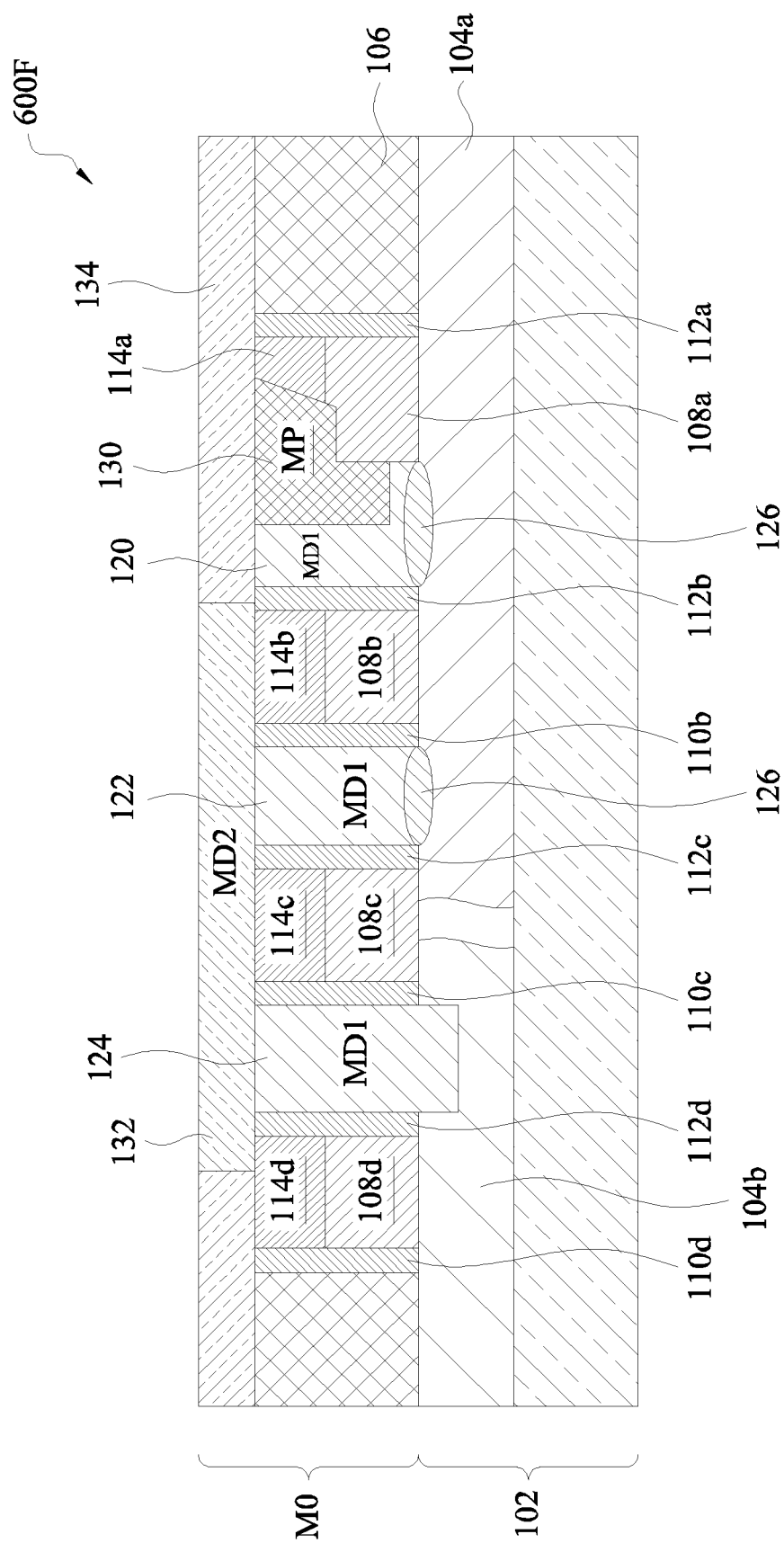


FIG. 6F

SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICE AND METHOD OF MANUFACTURING SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICE

BACKGROUND

The recent trend in miniaturizing integrated circuits (ICs) has resulted in smaller devices which consume less power yet provide more functionality at higher speeds. For one or more of these advantages to be realized, various developments in IC design and/or manufacture are considered.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Aspects of the present disclosure are best understood from the following detailed description when read with the accompanying figures. It is noted that, in accordance with the standard practice in the industry, various features are not drawn to scale. In fact, the dimensions of the various features may be arbitrarily increased or reduced for clarity of discussion.

FIG. 1 is a schematic cross-sectional view of a semiconductor device in accordance with some embodiments.

FIG. 2A is a schematic cross-sectional view of a semiconductor device in accordance with one or more embodiments.

FIG. 2B is a portion of a layout diagram of the semiconductor device shown in FIG. 2A in accordance with one or more embodiments.

FIG. 3A is a schematic cross-sectional view of a semiconductor device in accordance with one or more embodiments.

FIG. 3B is a portion of a layout diagram of the semiconductor device shown in FIG. 3A in accordance with one or more embodiments.

FIG. 4A is a portion of a layout diagram of a semiconductor device in accordance with one or more embodiments.

FIG. 4B is a schematic cross-sectional view of a portion of the semiconductor device shown in FIG. 4A in accordance with one or more embodiments.

FIG. 5 is a flow chart of a method of manufacturing a semiconductor device in accordance with some embodiments.

FIGS. 6A-6F are schematic cross-sectional views of the semiconductor device of the method shown in FIG. 5 at various manufacturing stages in accordance with some embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following disclosure provides many different embodiments, or examples, for implementing different features of the provided subject matter. Specific examples of components and arrangements are described below to simplify the present disclosure. These are, of course, merely examples and are not intended to be limiting. For example, the formation of a first feature over or on a second feature in the description that follows may include embodiments in which the first and second features are formed in direct contact, and may also include embodiments in which additional features may be formed between the first and second features, such that the first and second features may not be in direct contact. In addition, the present disclosure may repeat reference numerals and/or letters in the various examples. This repetition is for the purpose of simplicity and clarity and does not in itself dictate a relationship between the various embodiments and/or configurations discussed.

Further, spatially relative terms, such as “beneath,” “below,” “lower,” “above,” “upper” and the like, may be used herein for ease of description to describe one element or

feature's relationship to another element(s) or feature(s) as illustrated in the figures. The spatially relative terms are intended to encompass different orientations of the device in use or operation in addition to the orientation depicted in the figures. The apparatus may be otherwise oriented (rotated 90 degrees or at other orientations) and the spatially relative descriptors used herein may likewise be interpreted accordingly. Further, when a first element is described as being “connected” or “coupled” to a second element, such description includes embodiments in which the first and second elements are directly connected or coupled to each other, and also includes embodiments in which the first and second elements are indirectly connected or coupled to each other with one or more other intervening elements in between.

FIG. 1 is a schematic cross-sectional view of a semiconductor device 100 in accordance with some embodiments. The semiconductor device 100 includes a substrate 102, an inter-layer dielectric (ILD) layer 106, gate structures 108a, 108b, 108c and 108d, a pair of first spacers 110a and 112a, a pair of second spacers 110b and 112b, a pair of third spacers 110c and 112c, a pair of fourth spacers 110d and 112d, insulating layers 114a, 114b, 114c and 114d, first conductive features 120, 122 and 124, silicided regions 126, a second conductive feature 130, a third conductive feature 132 and ILD layer 134.

The semiconductor device 100 includes active elements and/or passive elements. Examples of active elements include, but are not limited to, transistors and diodes. Examples of transistors include, but are not limited to, metal oxide semiconductor field effect transistors (MOSFET), complementary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS) transistors, bipolar junction transistors (BJT), high voltage transistors, high frequency transistors, p-channel and/or n-channel field effect transistors (PFETs/NFETs), etc.), FinFETs, and planar MOS transistors with raised source/drains. Examples of passive elements include, but are not limited to, capacitors, inductors, fuses, and resistors. In the example configuration illustrated in FIG. 1, the semiconductor device 100 is a portion of a transistor. The source feature (not shown), the drain feature (not shown), the channel feature (not shown) and the gate structure (e.g., gate structure 108a, 108b, 108c or 108d) together define the transistor.

The substrate 102 comprises bulk silicon, a semiconductor wafer, a silicon-on-insulator (SOI) substrate, or a silicon germanium substrate. Other semiconductor materials including group III, group IV, and group V elements are within the scope of various embodiments.

The substrate 102 comprises an active region 104a and one or more isolation structures 104b. The active region 104a is isolated from other elements of the semiconductor device 100 by one or more isolation structures 104b. The symbol 105 schematically illustrates that the described structures (e.g., active region 104a or isolation structure 104b) are arranged in various regions of semiconductor device 100 which are not homogeneous throughout in one or more embodiments.

The active region 104a is a doped region of the substrate 102 and includes a source feature (not shown), a drain feature (not shown), and a channel feature (not shown) positioned between the source feature and drain feature. Examples of materials of the active region 104a include, but are not limited to, semiconductor materials doped with various types of p-dopants and/or n-dopants. The active region 104a is referred to herein as an oxide definition (OD) area or pattern.

The one or more isolation structures 104b isolate the active region 104a from other portions of the semiconductor device 100. In some embodiments, the one or more isolation structures 104b are embedded in the substrate 102. In some

embodiments, the one or more isolation structures **104b** are over the substrate **102**. In some embodiments, the one or more isolation structures **104b** are shallow trench isolation (STI) structures.

The ILD layer **106** is over the active region **104a** or the isolation structure **104b**. The ILD layer **106** is also referred to herein as an ILD0 layer," i.e. inter-layer dielectric-zero (ILD0) layer.

Gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d** are over a top surface of a substrate **102**. Gate structures **108a** and **108b** are over active region **104a**. Gate structure **108c** is over symbol **105**. In some embodiments, gate structure **108c** is over active region **104a**. In some embodiments, gate structure **108c** is over isolation structure **104b**. Gate structure **108d** is over isolation structure **104b**. The illustrations shown in FIG. 1 are exemplary, and the number of gate structures over the active region **104a** or the one or more isolation structures varies. In some embodiments, gate structures **108a** and **108b** are over a channel region (not shown). In some embodiments, the gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d** are referred to herein as a poly (PO) pattern and are schematically illustrated in the drawings with the label "PO." Examples of materials of gate structure **108a**, **108b**, **108c** or **108d** include, but are not limited to, metal and polysilicon. In some embodiments, gate structure **108a**, **108b**, **108c** or **108d** comprises a dummy gate. In some embodiments, gate structure **108a**, **108b**, **108c** or **108d** comprises a metal gate. Gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d** are adjacent with each other. In some embodiments, an adjacent gate structure is a gate structure within a predetermined distance of other gate structures in the semiconductor device **100**. In some embodiments, a portion of the gate structure **108a** is removed.

A pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a** is on opposite sidewalls of the gate structure **108a**. The pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a** comprises, for instance, a dielectric layer. A height of the first spacer **110a** is less than the height of the first spacer **112a**. In some embodiments, the height of the first spacer **112a** is greater than the height of the gate structure **108a**. In some embodiments, the top surface of the first sidewall spacer **110a** is not coplanar with the top surface of the first sidewall spacer **112a**.

A pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b** is on opposite sidewalls of the gate structure **108b**. The pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b** comprises, for instance, a dielectric layer. In some embodiments, the height of the second spacer **110b** or **112b** is greater than the height of the gate structure **108b**.

A pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** is on opposite sidewalls of the gate structure **108c**. The pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** comprises, for instance, a dielectric layer. In some embodiments, the height of the third spacer **110c** or **112c** is greater than the height of the gate structure **108c**.

A pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d** is on opposite sidewalls of the gate structure **108d**. The pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d** comprises, for instance, a dielectric layer. In some embodiments, the height of the fourth spacer **110d** or **112d** is greater than the height of the gate structure **108d**.

Insulating layer **114a** is over gate structure **108a**. In some embodiments, the height of insulating layer **114a** is substantially equal to the height of the first spacer **112a**. In some embodiments, the top surface of insulating layer **114a** is substantially coplanar with the top surface of the first spacer **112a**. In some embodiments, a portion of the insulating layer **114a** is removed. In some embodiments, the insulating layer **114a** comprises a hard mask.

Insulating layer **114b** is over gate structure **108b**. In some embodiments, the height of insulating layer **114b** is substantially equal to the height of the second spacer **110b** or **112b**. In

some embodiments, the top surface of insulating layer **114b** is substantially coplanar with the top surface of the second spacer **110b** or **112b**. In some embodiments, a portion of the insulating layer **114b** is removed. In some embodiments, the insulating layer **114b** comprises a hard mask. In some embodiments, the insulating layer **114b** is embedded between the pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**.

Insulating layer **114c** is over gate structure **108c**. In some embodiments, the height of insulating layer **114c** is substantially equal to the height of the third spacer **110c** or **112c**. In some embodiments, the top surface of insulating layer **114c** is substantially coplanar with the top surface of the third spacer **110c** or **112c**. In some embodiments, a portion of the insulating layer **114c** is removed. In some embodiments, the insulating layer **114c** comprises a hard mask. In some embodiments, the insulating layer **114c** is embedded between the pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c**.

Insulating layer **114d** is over gate structure **108d**. In some embodiments, the height of insulating layer **114d** is substantially equal to the height of the fourth spacer **110d** or **112d**. In some embodiments, the top surface of insulating layer **114d** is substantially coplanar with the top surface of the fourth spacer **110d** or **112d**. In some embodiments, a portion of the insulating layer **114d** is removed. In some embodiments, the insulating layer **114d** comprises a hard mask. In some embodiments, the insulating layer **114d** is embedded between the pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**.

First conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** is over semiconductor device **100** to provide electrical connections to the semiconductor device **100**.

First conductive feature **120** is embedded in the ILD layer **106** to provide electrical connection to the gate structure **108a** and the corresponding exposed source/drain features (e.g., active region **104a**) of gate structure **108a** or **108b**. In some embodiments, the top surface of the first conductive feature **120** is coplanar with a top surface of the insulating layer **114a**, **114b**, **114c** or **114d**. In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **120** has a varied thickness. In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **120** has a tapered shape. In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **120** has an L-shape.

First conductive feature **122** is embedded in the ILD layer **106** to provide electrical connection to the exposed source/drain features (e.g., active region **104a**) of gate structure **108b** or **108c**. In some embodiments, the top surface of the first conductive feature **122** is coplanar with a top surface of the insulating layer **114a**, **114b**, **114c** or **114d**. First conductive features **120**, **122** and **124** are over the active region **104a**, and belong to a lower conductive layer referred to herein as MD1 layer or pattern. The MD1 layer is a metal-zero-over-oxide layer and is schematically illustrated in the drawings with the label "MD1."

First conductive feature **124** extends at least partially into the isolation structure **104b**. First conductive feature **124** is over the isolation structure **104b**, and belongs to a lower conductive layer referred to herein as MD1 layer or pattern. In some embodiments, the top surface of the first conductive feature **124** is coplanar with a top surface of the insulating layer **114a**, **114b**, **114c** or **114d**. In some embodiments, first conductive feature **124** is embedded in the isolation structure **104b**.

Silicided regions **126** are between the first conductive features **120** and **122** and the top surface of the active region **104a** (e.g., source/drain features) of semiconductor device **100**.

Second conductive feature **130** is over and electrically coupled to the corresponding first conductive feature **120**. Second conductive feature **130** is referred to herein as a metal-zero-over-polysilicon (MP) layer or pattern and is schemati-

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cally illustrated in the drawings with the label “MP.” In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** is in direct electrical contact with the gate structure **108a**. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** is in direct electrical contact with the corresponding first conductive feature **120**. The illustrations shown in FIG. 1 are exemplary, and the number of second conductive features **130** varies. In some embodiments, second conductive feature **130** is electrically connected to more than one first conductive feature. In some embodiments, the top surface of the first conductive feature **120** is coplanar with the top surface of the second conductive feature **130**. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** has a varied thickness. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** has a tapered shape. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** has an L-shape. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** has a U-shape. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature **130** is embedded in the first conductive feature **120**. In some embodiments, a material of the second conductive feature **130** is substantially similar to the material of the first conductive feature **120**. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature **130** is embedded between the first conductive feature **120**, the gate structure **108a** and the pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** is directly on the first spacer **110a**. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** is electrically connected to the gate structure **108a**.

Third conductive feature **132** is over first conductive features **120**, **122** and **124**, and second conductive feature **130**. Third conductive feature **132** is embedded in ILD layer **134**. Third conductive feature **132** belongs to an upper conductive layer referred to herein as MD2 layer or pattern. The MD2 layer is also a metal-zero-over-oxide layer and is schematically illustrated in the drawings with the label “MD2.”

Third conductive feature **132** is over the gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is electrically coupled to the source/drain of gate structure **108b** or **108c** by first conductive feature **122**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is configured to provide an electrical connection to the first conductive features **120** and **122** or the second conductive feature **130**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is configured to provide an electrical connection to the active region **104a** of the semiconductor device **100**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is configured to provide an electrical connection to one or more isolation regions (e.g., isolation structure **104b**) of the semiconductor device **100**.

In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is electrically coupled to first conductive features **122** or **124**. In some embodiments, insulating layers **114b**, **114c** and **114d** electrically insulate the corresponding gate structures **108b**, **108c** and **108d** from the third conductive feature **132**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is over the active region **104a**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is over the isolation structure **104b**. The illustrations shown in FIG. 1 are exemplary, and the number of third conductive features **132** varies. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is electrically connected to one or more of the first conductive features **120**, **122** and **124**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is electrically connected to one or more second conductive features **130**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** is electrically connected to other layers (not shown) in the semiconductor device **100**. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** is configured to provide a larger con-

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tact area to the gate structure **108a** when compared with similar conductive features positioned above the gate structure **108a**.

The ILD layer **134** is over the ILD layer **106**. The ILD layer **134** is also referred to herein as an “ILD1 layer,” i.e. inter-layer dielectric-one (ILD1) layer.

The MP, MD1 and MD2 layers are independently chosen from conductive materials and belong to a first (i.e., lowermost) conductive material layer over the substrate **102** referred to herein as “M0 layer,” i.e., metal-zero (M0) layer, which is the lowermost metal layer of the semiconductor device **100**. In some embodiments, the MP, MD1 and MD2 layers are metal and belong to first metal layer M0. The M0 layer is schematically illustrated in the drawings with the label “M0.” In at least one embodiment, the M0 layer is formed in two steps. For example, in a first step, the lower portion, i.e., the top surface of the MD1 and MP layers, are substantially coplanar with the insulating layers **114a**, **114b**, **114c** and **114d**. In a second step, the upper portion, i.e., the MD2 layer, is formed over the corresponding MD1 and MP layers and gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d**. In some embodiments, the M0 layer is referred to as the local interconnect layer.

In some embodiments, one or more of the MD1, MP and MD2 layers provide electrical connections between various elements of the semiconductor device **100** and/or between one or more elements of the semiconductor device **100** and external circuitry. The above-described structure is an example configuration, and other arrangements of electrical connections among elements of the semiconductor device **100** are contemplated in various embodiments. For example, in one or more embodiments, one or more via layers (not shown) are over and connected to the M0 layer. In some embodiments, the one or more via layers (not shown) provide electrical connection to further metal layers (not shown) over the M0 layer.

FIG. 2A is a schematic cross-sectional view of a semiconductor device **200** in accordance with one or more embodiments. Semiconductor device **200** is an embodiment of semiconductor device **100** shown in FIG. 1 with similar elements. As shown in FIG. 2A, similar elements have a same reference number as shown in FIG. 1. In comparison with FIG. 1, the semiconductor device **200** of FIG. 2A does not include isolation structure **104b**, ILD **106**, gate structure **108d**, pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**, insulating layers **114b** and **114d**, first conductive feature **124**, second conductive feature **130** and third conductive feature **132**.

In comparison with FIG. 1, the semiconductor device **200** comprises a transistor **201** and a second conductive feature **230**. Second conductive feature **230** is an embodiment of second conductive feature **130** shown in FIG. 1. First conductive feature **220** is an embodiment of first conductive feature **120** shown in FIG. 1. First spacer **210a** is an embodiment of first spacer **110a** shown in FIG. 1. Second spacer **212b** is an embodiment of second spacer **112b** shown in FIG. 1.

Transistor **201** comprises active region **104a** (which includes a source feature (not shown), a drain feature (not shown), and a channel region (not shown)) and a gate structure **108b**.

In comparison with FIG. 1, the second conductive feature **230** is electrically connected to the gate structure **108b**. Second conductive feature **230** is electrically coupled to the corresponding first conductive feature **220**. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **230** is in direct contact with the gate structure **108b**. While FIG. 2A does not show an insulating layer **114b** over the gate structure **108b**, other embodiments exist where a portion of the insulating layer

114b is over the gate structure 108b, and the second conductive feature 230 is in direct contact with the top surface of the gate structure 108b and the remaining portion of the insulating layer 114b. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 230 is in direct electrical contact with the corresponding first conductive feature 220. In some embodiments, the top surface of the first conductive feature 220 is coplanar with the top surface of the second conductive feature 230. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 230 has a tapered shape. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 230 has an L-shape. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 230 has a U-shape. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature 230 is embedded in the first conductive feature 220. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature 230 is positioned between the first conductive feature 220, the gate structure 108b and the pair of second spacers 210b and 212b. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature 230 is embedded in the first conductive feature 220, the gate structure 108b and the pair of second spacers 210b and 212b.

In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 230 is directly on the second spacer 212b. In some embodiments, the height of the second spacer 110b with respect to the top of substrate 102 is greater than the height of the second spacer 212b with respect to the top of substrate 102. In some embodiments, the height of the first spacer 210a with respect to the top of substrate 102 is substantially equal to the height of the first spacer 112a with respect to the top of substrate 102. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 230 is configured to provide a larger contact area to the gate structure 108b when compared with similar conductive features positioned above the gate structure 108b. In some embodiments, a material of the second conductive feature 230 is substantially similar to the material of the first conductive feature 220.

FIG. 2B is a portion of a layout diagram 200' of the semiconductor device shown in FIG. 2A in accordance with one or more embodiments. The layout diagram 200' of FIG. 2B is a top-view of a portion of the semiconductor device shown in FIG. 2A, and includes similar elements having a same reference number as shown in FIG. 2A. One or more of the layout patterns described herein are usable to prepare a set of masks usable for manufacturing a memory cell in an integrated circuit. The layout diagram 200' of semiconductor device 200 is a basis to be modified to form other layout structures, such as those described herein, e.g., FIGS. 3B and 4.

Layout diagram 200' includes active region 104a, gate structures 108a, 108b and 108c, first conductive features 122 and 220, isolation region 204, second conductive feature 230 and power rail 202. Isolation region 204 is an embodiment of isolation structure 104b shown in FIG. 1.

The active region 104a extends continuously in the width direction (i.e., in the horizontal direction of FIG. 2B). Active region 104a comprises drain feature D and source feature S. Active region 104a is electrically isolated from the power rail 202 by isolation region 204.

The gate structures 108a, 108b and 108c extend continuously in the height direction (i.e., in the vertical direction of FIG. 2B). The gate structures 108a, 108b and 108c extend over the active region 104a and across the isolation structure 204. The gate structures 108a, 108b and 108c are electrically isolated from each other by isolation region 204.

The power rail 202 extends in the width direction (i.e., in the horizontal direction of FIG. 2B). In some embodiments, the power rail 202 is configured to provide electrical power to the semiconductor device 200.

Transistor device 201 comprises gate structure 108b, source feature S and drain feature D. The first conductive feature 122 (e.g., MD1) is electrically connected to the drain feature D of the transistor device 201. The first conductive feature 220 (e.g., MD1) is electrically connected to the source feature S of the transistor device 201. The gate structure 108b is electrically connected to the source feature S of the transistor device 201 by second conductive feature 230 (e.g., MP) and first conductive feature 220 (e.g., MD1). In some embodiments, the gate structure 108b is directly connected to the second conductive feature 230 (e.g., MP). In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 230 (e.g., MP) is directly connected to the first conductive feature 220 (e.g., MD1). In some embodiments, the first conductive feature 220 (e.g., MD1) is connected to the source feature S.

FIG. 3A is a schematic cross-sectional view of a semiconductor device 300 in accordance with one or more embodiments. Semiconductor device 300 is an embodiment of semiconductor device 200 shown in FIG. 2A with similar elements. As shown in FIG. 3A, similar elements have a same reference number as shown in FIG. 2A.

In comparison with FIG. 1, the semiconductor device 200 comprises a transistor 301, a second conductive feature 230 and second spacer 310b. Second conductive feature 330 is an embodiment of second conductive feature 230 shown in FIG. 2A. Second spacer 310b is an embodiment of first spacer 110a shown in FIG. 2A.

Transistor 301 comprises active region 104a (which includes a source feature (not shown), a drain feature (not shown), and a channel region (not shown)) and a gate structure 108b.

The second conductive feature 230 is electrically connected to the gate structure 108b. Second conductive feature 230 is electrically coupled to the corresponding first conductive features 220 and 322. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 330 is in direct contact with the gate structure 108b. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 330 is in direct electrical contact with the corresponding first conductive features 220 and 322. In some embodiments, the top surface of the first conductive feature 220 or 322 is coplanar with the top surface of the second conductive feature 330. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 330 has a tapered shape. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 330 has an L-shape. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 330 has a U-shape. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature 330 is embedded in the first conductive feature 220 or 322. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature 330 is positioned between the first conductive feature 220, the gate structure 108b, the pair of second spacers 310b and 212b and the first conductive feature 322. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature 330 is embedded in the first conductive feature 220 or 322, the gate structure 108b and the pair of second spacers 310b and 212b. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 330 is directly on the second spacer 212b or 310b. In some embodiments, the height of the second spacer 310b is substantially equal to the height of the second spacer 212b. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature 330 is configured to provide a larger contact area to the gate structure 108b when compared with similar conductive features positioned above the gate structure 108b. In some embodiments, a material of the second conductive feature 330 is substantially similar to the material of the first conductive feature 220 or 322.

FIG. 3B is a portion of a layout diagram 300' of the semiconductor device shown in FIG. 3A in accordance with one or

more embodiments. The layout diagram **300'** of FIG. 3B is a top-view of a portion of the semiconductor device shown in FIG. 3A. The layout diagram **300'** of FIG. 3B is a top-view of a portion of the semiconductor device shown in FIG. 3A, and includes similar elements having a same reference number as shown in FIG. 3A. One or more of the layout patterns described herein are usable to prepare a set of masks usable for manufacturing a memory cell in an integrated circuit. The layout diagram **300'** of semiconductor device **300** is a basis to be modified to form other layout structures, such as those described herein, e.g., FIGS. 2B and 4.

Layout diagram **300'** is an embodiment of layout diagram **200'** shown in FIG. 2B with similar elements. As shown in FIG. 3B, similar elements have a same reference number as shown in FIG. 2B.

Layout diagram **300'** includes active region **104a**, gate structures **108a**, **108b** and **108c**, first conductive features **322** and **220**, isolation region **204**, second conductive feature **330**. Isolation region **204** is an embodiment of isolation structure **104b** shown in FIG. 1.

The active region **104a** extends continuously in the width direction (i.e., in the horizontal direction of FIG. 3B). Active region **104a** comprises drain feature D and source feature S. Active region **104a** is electrically isolated from other portions of semiconductor device **300** by isolation region **204**.

The gate structures **108a**, **108b** and **108c** extend continuously in the height direction (i.e., in the vertical direction of FIG. 3B). The gate structures **108a**, **108b** and **108c** extend over the active region **104a** and across the isolation structure **204**. The gate structures **108a**, **108b** and **108c** are electrically isolated from each other by isolation region **204**.

Transistor device **301** comprises gate structure **108b**, source feature S and drain feature D. The first conductive feature **322** (e.g., MD1) is electrically connected to the drain feature D of the transistor device **201**. The gate structure **108b** is electrically connected to the drain feature D of the transistor device **301** by second conductive feature **330** (e.g., MP) and first conductive feature **322** (e.g., MD1). In some embodiments, the gate structure **108b** is directly connected to the second conductive feature **330** (e.g., MP). In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **330** (e.g., MP) is directly connected to the first conductive feature **322** (e.g., MD1). In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **322** (e.g., MD1) is connected to the drain feature D.

The first conductive feature **220** (e.g., MD1) is electrically connected to the source feature S of the transistor device **301**. The gate structure **108b** is electrically connected to the source feature S of the transistor device **301** by second conductive feature **330** (e.g., MP) and first conductive feature **220** (e.g., MD1). In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **330** (e.g., MP) is directly connected to the first conductive feature **220** (e.g., MD1). In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **220** (e.g., MD1) is connected to the source feature S.

FIG. 4A is a portion of a layout diagram **400** of a semiconductor device in accordance with one or more embodiments. The layout diagram **400** of FIG. 4A is an embodiment of the layout diagram **200'** shown in FIG. 2B. As shown in FIG. 4A, similar elements have a same reference number as shown in FIG. 2B. One or more of the layout patterns described herein are usable to prepare a set of masks usable for manufacturing a memory cell in an integrated circuit. The layout diagram **400** of the semiconductor device is a basis to be modified to form other layout structures, such as those described herein, e.g., FIGS. 2B, 3B and 6A-6F.

Layout diagram **400** includes active regions **404a** and **404b**, gate structures **408a**, **408b**, **408c** and **408d**, isolation region **404**, second conductive feature **430** and third conductive features **432a** and **432b**.

Active regions **404a** and **404b** are an embodiment of active region **104a** shown in FIG. 2B. Gate structures **408a**, **408b**, **408c** and **408d** are an embodiment of gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d** shown in FIG. 1. Isolation region **404** is an embodiment of isolation structure **104b** shown in FIG. 1. Second conductive feature **430** is an embodiment of second conductive feature **130** shown in FIG. 1. Third conductive features **432a** and **432b** are an embodiment of third conductive feature **132** shown in FIG. 1.

Active regions **404a** and **404b** extend in the width direction (i.e., in the horizontal direction of FIG. 4A). Active region **404a** is electrically isolated from the active region **404b** by isolation region **404**. In some embodiments, active regions **404a** and **404b** include p or n doped materials.

The gate structures **408a**, **408b**, **408c** and **408d** extend in the height direction (i.e., in the vertical direction of FIG. 4A). The gate structures **408a**, **408b**, **408c** and **408d** extend over the active regions **404a** and **404b**, and across the isolation structure **404**. The gate structures **408a**, **408b**, **408c** and **408d** are electrically isolated from each other by isolation region **404**.

The second conductive feature **430** (e.g., MP) extends in the width direction (i.e., in the horizontal direction of FIG. 4A). In some embodiments, second conductive feature **430** (e.g., MP) is electrically connected to the gate structure **408c**. In some embodiments, second conductive feature **430** (e.g., MP) is directly connected to the gate structure **408c**. In some embodiments, second conductive feature **430** (e.g., MP) is arranged to extend across isolation region **404**.

The third conductive feature **432a** (e.g., MD2) extends in the width direction (i.e., in the horizontal direction of FIG. 4A). In some embodiments, third conductive feature **432a** (e.g., MD2) is electrically connected to the source/drain features (e.g., active region **404a**) of the gate structure **408c**.

In some embodiments, third conductive feature **432a** (e.g., MD2) extends across active regions **404a** and **404b**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **432a** (e.g., MD2) is arranged to extend over active region **404a** without being electrically connected to the gate structure **408c**.

The third conductive feature **432b** (e.g., MD2) extends in the height direction (i.e., in the vertical direction of FIG. 4A). In some embodiments, third conductive feature **432b** (e.g., MD2) is electrically connected to the source/drain feature (e.g., active region **404a**) and the source/drain feature (e.g., active region **404b**). In some embodiments, third conductive feature **432b** (e.g., MD2) is arranged to extend across isolation region **404**.

FIG. 4B is a schematic cross-sectional view of a portion of the semiconductor device **400'** shown in FIG. 4A in accordance with one or more embodiments. The schematic cross-sectional diagram **400'** of FIG. 4B is a cross-sectional view of a portion of the layout **400** shown in FIG. 4A, and includes similar elements having a same reference number as shown in FIG. 4A. Semiconductor device **400'** is an embodiment of semiconductor device **100** shown in FIG. 1 with similar elements. As shown in FIG. 4B, similar elements have a same reference number as shown in FIG. 1.

Third conductive feature **432a** (e.g., MD2) is over gate structure **408c**, insulating layer **414c** and first conductive features **122** and **124** (e.g., MD1). As shown in FIG. 4B, third conductive feature **432a** (e.g., MD2) is arranged to extend over active region **404a** without being electrically connected to the gate structure **408c**. As shown in FIG. 4B, third con-

ductive feature **432a** (e.g., MD2) is electrically isolated from the gate structure **408c** by insulating layer **414c**. As shown in FIG. 4B, third conductive feature **432a** (e.g., MD2) is electrically connected to first conductive features **122** and **124** (e.g., MD1), without being electrically connected to the gate structure **408c**.

FIG. 5 is a flow chart of a method **500** of manufacturing a semiconductor device **600F** (shown in FIG. 6F), in accordance with some embodiments. FIGS. 6A-6F are schematic cross-sectional views of the semiconductor device **600F** at various manufacturing stages, in accordance with some embodiments. Semiconductor device **600F** is an embodiment of semiconductor device **100** shown in FIG. 1 with similar elements. As shown in FIGS. 6A-6F, similar elements have a same reference number as shown in FIG. 1.

One or more effects discussed herein with respect to FIGS. 1-4 is/are obtainable in the manufacturing method **500** in accordance with some embodiments.

At operation **502** of the method **500**, an active region **104a** is formed in a substrate **102**. The substrate **102** comprises, in at least one embodiment, a silicon substrate. The substrate **102** comprises, in at least one embodiment, silicon germanium (SiGe), Gallium arsenic, or other suitable semiconductor materials. In at least one embodiment, the isolation structures **104b** (e.g., shallow trench isolation (STI) regions) are formed in the substrate **102** for isolating active area **104a** in the substrate **102**. Example materials of the STI regions **104b** include, but are not limited to, silicon oxide, silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, fluoride-doped silicate, and/or any other low k dielectric materials. In some embodiments, the substrate **102** further includes one or more other features, such as various doped regions, a buried layer, and/or an epitaxy (epi) layer. In some embodiments, the substrate **102** comprises a semiconductor on insulator, such as silicon on insulator (SOI). In some embodiments, the substrate **102** includes a doped epi layer, a gradient semiconductor layer, and/or a semiconductor layer overlying another semiconductor layer of a different type such as a silicon layer on a silicon germanium layer. In some embodiments, operation **502** is optional, where a semiconductor device having an active region is already formed.

At operation **504** of the method **500**, at least a first gate structure **108a** and a second gate structure **108b** are formed on the substrate **102**. In some embodiments, in operation **504**, a first gate structure **108a**, a second gate structure **108b**, a third gate structure **108c** and a fourth gate structure **108d** are formed on the substrate **102** (as shown in FIG. 6A).

In some embodiments, the gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d** are formed over the substrate **102** including a gate dielectric (not shown) on the substrate **102**. Example materials of the gate dielectric include, but are not limited to, a high-k dielectric layer, an interfacial layer, and/or combinations thereof. Example materials for the high-k dielectric layer include, but are not limited to, silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, hafnium oxide (HfO₂), hafnium silicon oxide (HfSiO), hafnium silicon oxynitride (HfSiON), hafnium tantalum oxide (HfTaO), hafnium titanium oxide (HfTiO), hafnium zirconium oxide (HfZrO), metal oxides, metal nitrides, metal silicates, transition metal-oxides, transition metal-nitrides, transition metal-silicates, oxynitrides of metals, metal aluminates, zirconium silicate, zirconium aluminate, zirconium oxide, titanium oxide, aluminum oxide, hafnium dioxide-alumina (HfO₂—Al₂O₃) alloy, other suitable high-k dielectric materials, and/or combinations thereof. The thickness of the high-k dielectric layer is in the range of, for instance, about 5 angstroms (Å) to about 40 Å. In some

embodiments, the gate dielectric is formed over the substrate **102** by atomic layer deposition (ALD) or other suitable techniques.

In some embodiments, the gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d** further include a gate electrode (not shown) formed over the gate dielectric (not shown). The thickness of the gate electrode ranges, for instance, from about 10 to about 500 Å. The gate electrode is formed of poly-silicon or metal. In one or more embodiments, the gate electrode comprises Al, AlTi, Ti, TiN, TaN, Ta, TaC, TaSiN, W, WN, MoN, and/or other suitable conductive materials. In some embodiments, the gate electrode is formed by chemical vapor deposition (CVD), physical vapor deposition (PVD or sputtering), plating, atomic layer deposition (ALD), and/or other suitable processes.

At operation **506** of the method **500**, an insulating layer (e.g., shown in FIG. 5A as insulating layer **114a** and **114b**) is formed on at least a first gate structure **108a** and a second gate structure **108b**. In some embodiments, in operation **506**, an insulating layer (e.g., shown in FIG. 5A as insulating layer **114a**, **114b**, **114c** and **114d**) is formed on gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d**. In some embodiments, insulating layer **114a**, **114b**, **114c** and **114d** comprises a hard mask **521**. In some embodiments, the insulating layer **114a**, **114b**, **114c** and **114d** includes silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, silicon carbide or other suitable materials. In some embodiments, the insulating layer **114a**, **114b**, **114c** and **114d** is formed, in at least one embodiment, by a deposition process or any suitable methods, and used as a mask to pattern the gate structures **108a**, **108b**, **108c** and **108d**.

At operation **508** of the method **500**, a pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) are formed on each sidewall of the gate structures (e.g., first gate structure **108a**, second gate structure **108b**, gate structures **108c** and **108d**).

The pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) are formed on sidewalls of the gate structures (e.g., first gate structure **108a**, second gate structure **108b**, gate structures **108c** and **108d**). The pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) comprises, for instance, a dielectric layer. In one or more embodiments, the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) is formed of silicon nitride. In some embodiments, the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) includes oxynitride. In some embodiments, the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) is formed of silicon carbide. In some embodiments, the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) contains an impurity, such as boron, carbon, fluorine, or combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) is formed by suitable methods. First, a layer for the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third

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spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) is deposited over the gate structure (e.g., first gate structure **108a**, second gate structure **108b**, gate structures **108c** and **108d**) and the substrate **102**, for example, by plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition (PECVD), low-pressure chemical vapor deposition (LPCVD), sub-atmospheric chemical vapor deposition (SACVD), atomic layer deposition (ALD), and the like. The layer for the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) is formed to have a suitable thickness, e.g., in the range of about 50 Å to about 400 Å. Further, the deposited layer for the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) is patterned to form the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) in contact or adjacent to the sidewalls of the gate structure (e.g., first gate structure **108a**, second gate structure **108b**, gate structures **108c** and **108d**). The patterning is performed, in at least one embodiment, by suitable techniques, such as a wet etch process, a dry etch process, or combinations thereof. In one or more embodiments, the patterning to form the pair of spacers (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) is conducted by an anisotropic dry etching process.

The above description where the gate structure (e.g., first gate structure **108a**, second gate structure **108b**, gate structures **108c** and **108d**) is formed before the spacer (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) is referred to as a gate-first process. In an alternative, gate-last process, the same or similar steps of the gate-first process is performed to form a dummy gate, e.g., dummy poly-silicon, and the spacer (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**). The dummy gate is replaced afterwards with a suitable metal or conductive material to obtain the gate structure (e.g., first gate structure **108a**, second gate structure **108b**, gate structures **108c** and **108d**).

Further, source and drain features are formed in an active area **104a** of the substrate **102** by using the gate structure (e.g., first gate structure **108a**, second gate structure **108b**, gate structures **108c** and **108d**) and the spacer (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**) as a mask. Thus, the active area **104a** includes the gate structure (e.g., first gate structure **108a**, second gate structure **108b**, gate structures **108c** and **108d**) and the source and drain features adjacent the gate structure (e.g., first gate structure **108a**, second gate structure **108b**, gate structures **108c** and **108d**). For example, the formation of the source/drain features is performed by an ion implantation or a diffusion process. Depending on the type of the semiconductor device, the source/drain features are doped with p-type dopants, such as boron or BF₂, n-type dopants, such as phosphorus or arsenic, and/or combinations thereof. In some embodiments, lightly doped source/drain (LDD) regions are formed in the substrate **102** prior to the formation of the spacer (e.g., pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**, pair of second spacers **110b** and **112b**, pair of third spacers **110c** and **112c** and pair of fourth spacers **110d** and **112d**), by one or more implantation processes, such as an ion implantation process.

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In some embodiments, an inter-layer dielectric (ILD) layer **106** is formed over the substrate **102**. A resulting semiconductor device structure **600A** is obtained as shown in FIG. 6A. In some embodiments, the resulting semiconductor device structure **600A** as shown in FIG. 6A is a useful intermediary which is connected to other materials for further processing. The ILD layer **106** is also referred to herein as an ILD0 layer. Example materials of the ILD layer **106** include, but are not limited to, SiNx, SiOx, SiON, SiC, SiBN, SiCBN, or combinations thereof. In at least one embodiment, the ILD layer **106** is formed using high-density plasma (HDP), although other methods such as Sub-Atmospheric Pressure Chemical Vapor Deposition (SACVD), Lower Pressure Chemical Vapor Deposition (LPCVD), ALD, Plasma enhanced ALD (PEALD), Plasma enhanced CVD (PECVD), Monolayer Deposition (MLD), Plasma Impulse CVD (PICVD), spin-on, or the like are used in various embodiments.

In some embodiments, a further ILD layer **602**, referred to herein as an ILD1 layer, is formed over the ILD layer **106**. The ILD layer **602** is also referred to herein as an ILD0 layer. Example materials of the ILD layer **602** include, but are not limited to, SiNx, SiOx, SiON, SiC, SiBN, SiCBN, or combinations thereof. In at least one embodiment, the ILD layer **106** is formed using HDP, although other methods such as SACVD, LPCVD, ALD, PEALD, PECVD, MLD, PICVD, spin-on, or the like are used in various embodiments.

In some embodiments, a hard mask layer **604** is deposited over the ILD layer **602**. In some embodiments, the hard mask layer **604** includes silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, silicon carbide or other suitable materials. In some embodiments, the hard mask layer **604** is formed, in at least one embodiment, by a deposition process or any suitable methods, and used as a mask to pattern the first contact features **120**, **122** and **124** (as shown in FIG. 600E).

In some embodiments, an anti-reflective coating (ARC) layer **606** is deposited over the hard mask layer **604**. In some embodiments, the ARC layer **606** is a bottom ARC (BARC) layer. In some embodiments, the ARC layer **606** includes a single layer or multiple layers. In some embodiments, the ARC layer **606** includes a dielectric material including an oxide; an organic polymer material, low-k dielectrics; high-k dielectrics; any other suitable material; or combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the ARC layer **606** is formed using any appropriate method, including in this case a spin-on coater or other suitable processes.

In some embodiments, a photoresist layer **608** is deposited over the ARC layer **606**. In some embodiments, the photoresist layer **608** is used to pattern the hard mask layer **604** to define, at least in part, the dimensions of the first contact features **120**, **122**, and **124**. In some embodiments, the photoresist layer **608** and the ARC layer **606** are selectively removed from regions **610a** and **610b** over the top surface of the hard mask layer **604**. A resulting semiconductor device structure **500B** is obtained as shown in FIG. 5B.

In some embodiments, the remaining ARC layer **606**, photoresist layer **608** and a portion of the hard mask layer **604** uncovered by both the ARC layer **606** and photoresist layer **608** (e.g., regions **610a** and **610b**) are selectively removed, e.g., by a photolithography process followed by an etching process, to expose the underlying first conductive regions **612a**, **612b** and **612c**. In some embodiments, the etching process removes portions of the ILD layer **106** located between at least two or more gate structures (e.g., gate structure **108a**, **108b**, **108c** or **108d**) forming regions **612b** and **612c**. In some embodiments, the etching process removes portions of the STI region (e.g., isolation structure **104b**) forming region **612a**. The hard mask layer **604** remains over

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the ILD layer **106** and a portion of ILD layer **602** so as not to expose the underlying ILD layer **106** to the etch process. A resulting semiconductor device structure **600C** is obtained as shown in FIG. 6C. In some embodiments, the resulting semiconductor device structure **600C** as shown in FIG. 6C is a useful intermediary which is connected to other materials for further processing.

At operation **510** of the method **500**, a portion **612d** of insulating layer (e.g., insulating layer **114a**, **114b**, **114c** or **114d**) over at least one of the gate structures (e.g., gate structure **108a**, **108b**, **108c** or **108d**) is etched. In some embodiments, in operation **510**, a portion **612d** of insulating layer (e.g., insulating layer **114a**) over the first gate structure **108a** is etched (as shown in FIG. 6C).

At operation **512** of the method **500**, at least a portion of at least one gate structure (e.g., gate structure **108a**, **108b**, **108c** or **108d**) is etched exposing the remaining portion of the gate structure (e.g., gate structure **108a**, **108b**, **108c** or **108d**). In some embodiments, in operation **512**, at least a portion of the first gate structure (e.g., gate structure **108a**) is chemically etched (as shown in FIG. 6D) exposing the remaining portion of the first gate structure (e.g., gate structure **108a**). In some embodiments, operation **512** is optional. A resulting semiconductor device structure **600D** is obtained as shown in FIG. 6D. In some embodiments, the resulting semiconductor device structure **600D** as shown in FIG. 6D is a useful intermediary which is connected to other materials for further processing.

In some embodiments, before forming the first conductive features **120**, **122** and **124** (e.g., the MD1 layer), a silicidation (e.g., self-aligned silicidation) process or a suitable method is performed to provide the top surfaces of the source/drain features (e.g., active region **104a**) with silicided regions **126** as contact features. For example, a metal layer is blanket-deposited over the exposed source/drain features (e.g., active region **104a**), and then an annealing step is performed to form metal silicide layers on the source/drain features (e.g., active region **104a**). Unreacted metal is subsequently removed, e.g., by a wet chemical etch.

At operation **514** of the method **500**, a first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) is formed over the active region **104a**, or a second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP) is formed over a portion **612d** of the etched insulating layer (e.g., insulating layer **114a**, **114b**, **114c** or **114d**) to be in direct electrical contact with the active region **104a**. A resulting semiconductor device structure **600E** is obtained as shown in FIG. 6E. For example, as shown in FIG. 6E, a conductive material is formed to fill the openings **612a**, **612b** and **612c**, and then planarized, to obtain corresponding first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) or second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP). In some embodiments, the planarizing process comprises, for example, a chemical mechanical polish (CMP) process.

In the example configuration illustrated in FIG. 5E, the first conductive feature **124** extends at least partially into the STI region (e.g., isolating structure **104b**), whereas first conductive features **120** and **122** make electrical connection with the corresponding exposed source/drain features (e.g., active region **104a**). In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) and the second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP) are formed of the same conductive materials. In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) and the second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP) are formed of different conductive materials. In some embodiments, a top surface of the first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) is substantially coplanar with a top surface of the second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP). In some embodiments, the first conductive

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feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) or the second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP) is formed of Tungsten.

In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** is in direct electrical contact with the gate structure **108a**. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** is in direct electrical contact with the corresponding first conductive feature **120**. The illustrations shown in FIG. 5E are exemplary, and the number of second conductive features **130** varies. In some embodiments, each second conductive feature **130** is electrically connected to more than one first conductive feature. In some embodiments, the top surface of the first conductive feature **120** is coplanar with the top surface of the second conductive feature **130**. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** has a tapered shape. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** has an L-shape. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** has a U-shape. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature **130** is embedded in the first conductive feature **120**. In some embodiments, a material of the second conductive feature **130** is substantially similar to the material of the first conductive feature **120**. In some embodiments, a portion of the second conductive feature **130** is embedded between the first conductive feature **120**, the gate structure **108a** and the pair of first spacers **110a** and **112a**. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature **130** is directly on the first spacer **110a**.

In some embodiments, a further ILD layer **134**, referred to herein as an ILD2 layer, is formed over the planarized first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) or second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP). Example materials of the ILD layer **134** include, but are not limited to, SiNx, SiOx, SiON, SiC, SiBN, SiCBN, or combinations thereof. In at least one embodiment, the ILD layer **134** is formed using HDP, although other methods such as SACVD, LPCVD, ALD, PEALD, PECVD, MLD, PICVD, spin-on, or the like are used in various embodiments. In some embodiments, a hard mask layer (not shown) is formed over the ILD layer **134**. In some embodiments, contact openings are formed in the ILD layer **134** by an etching process to expose underlying first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) or second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP).

At operation **516** of the method **500**, third conductive feature **132** (e.g., MD2) is formed over the first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) or second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP). In some embodiments, the third conductive feature **132** is formed over the gate structures (e.g., first gate structure **108a** or second gate structure **108b**). A conductive material is formed to fill the contact openings, to obtain third conductive feature **132** (e.g., MD2). A resulting semiconductor device structure **600F** is obtained as shown in FIG. 6F.

In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) and the third conductive feature **132** (e.g., MD2) are formed of different conductive materials. In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) and the third conductive feature **132** (e.g., MD2) are formed of the same conductive material. In some embodiments, the first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) and the third conductive feature **132** (e.g., MD2) are formed of tungsten. In some embodiments, the formation of at least one of the first conductive feature **120**, **122** or **124** (e.g., MD1) or the third conductive feature **132** (e.g., MD2) includes depositing a glue (or seed) metal layer before filling the corresponding conductive material(s) in the corresponding openings.

The above method(s) include(s) example operations, but the operations in some embodiments are not performed in the order shown. Operations may be added, replaced, changed

order, and/or eliminated as appropriate, in accordance with the spirit and scope of embodiments of the disclosure. Embodiments that combine different features and/or different embodiments are within the scope of the disclosure and will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art after reviewing this disclosure.

In summary, one or more embodiments implement at least a part of an electrical connection between elements of a semiconductor device in the M0 layer. In some embodiments, the second conductive feature (e.g., second conductive feature **130**, **230** or **330**) is configured to provide a larger contact area to one or more connected gate structures (e.g., gate structure **108a**, **108b**, **108c** or **108d**) when compared with similar conductive features positioned above the gate structure (and located above the first contact feature MD1). In some embodiments, second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP) is arranged to extend across active region **104a**. In some embodiments, second conductive feature **130** (e.g., MP) is arranged to extend across one or more isolation regions (e.g., isolation structure **104b** or **204**). In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** (e.g., MD2) is arranged to extend across one or more isolation regions (e.g., isolation structure **104b** or **204**). In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** (e.g., MD2) is arranged to extend across active regions **104a**. In some embodiments, third conductive feature **132** (e.g., MD2) is arranged to extend over active region **104a** without being electrically connected to one or more gate structures (e.g., gate structure **108a**, **108b**, **108c** or **108d**). As a result, one or more of manufacturing time, manufacturing cost, manufacturing material, and size of the semiconductor device is/are reduced compared to the other approaches.

In some embodiments, a semiconductor device includes a substrate having an active region, a first gate structure over a top surface of the substrate, a second gate structure over the top surface of the substrate, a pair of first spacers on each sidewall of the first gate structure, a pair of second spacers on each sidewall of the second gate structure, an insulating layer over at least the first gate structure, a first conductive feature over the active region and a second conductive feature over the substrate. Further, the second gate structure is adjacent to the first gate structure and a top surface of the first conductive feature is coplanar with a top surface of the second conductive feature.

In some embodiments, an integrated circuit comprising a substrate comprising a source feature, and a drain feature, a first gate structure over a top surface of the substrate, wherein the first gate structure is between the source feature and the drain feature, a second gate structure over the top surface of the substrate, wherein the second gate structure is adjacent to the first gate structure and the source feature, a pair of first spacers on each sidewall of the first gate structure, a pair of second spacers on each sidewall of the second gate structure, an insulating layer over at least the first gate structure, a first conductive feature over the source feature or the drain feature, wherein a top surface of the first conductive feature is coplanar with a top surface of the insulating layer, a second conductive feature over the substrate, and a third conductive feature, wherein the third conductive feature is over the first conductive feature or the second conductive feature.

In a method of manufacturing a semiconductor device in accordance with some embodiments, the method comprising forming an active region in a substrate, forming a first gate structure and a second gate structure on a substrate, wherein the second gate structure is adjacent to the first gate structure, forming an insulating layer on the first gate structure and the second gate structure, forming a pair of first spacers on each sidewall of the first gate structure, forming a pair of second

spacers on each sidewall of the second gate structure and forming a first conductive feature over the active region.

The foregoing outlines features of several embodiments so that those skilled in the art may better understand the aspects of the present disclosure. Those skilled in the art should appreciate that they may readily use the present disclosure as a basis for designing or modifying other processes and structures for carrying out the same purposes and/or achieving the same advantages of the embodiments introduced herein. Those skilled in the art should also realize that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure, and that they may make various changes, substitutions, and alterations herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure.

What is claimed is:

1. An integrated circuit comprising:

a substrate comprising:

a source feature, and
a drain feature;

a first gate structure over a top surface of the substrate, wherein the first gate structure is between the source feature and the drain feature;

a second gate structure over the top surface of the substrate, wherein the second gate structure is adjacent to the first gate structure and the source feature;

a pair of first spacers on each sidewall of the first gate structure;

a pair of second spacers on each sidewall of the second gate structure;

an insulating layer over at least the first gate structure, the insulating layer being embedded between the pair of first spacers on each sidewall of the first gate structure;

a first conductive feature over the source feature or the drain feature, wherein a top surface of the first conductive feature is coplanar with a top surface of the insulating layer;

a second conductive feature over the substrate; and

a third conductive feature, wherein the third conductive feature is over the first conductive feature or the second conductive feature.

2. The integrated circuit of claim **1**, wherein the first conductive feature or the second conductive feature has an L-shape.

3. The integrated circuit of claim **1**, wherein a portion of the second conductive feature is between the first conductive feature, the second gate structure and the pair of second spacers on each sidewall of the second gate structure.

4. The integrated circuit of claim **1**, wherein the pair of second spacers comprises:

a first sidewall spacer; and

a second sidewall spacer, wherein a top surface of the first sidewall spacer is not coplanar with a top surface of the second sidewall spacer.

5. The integrated circuit of claim **4**, wherein the second conductive feature is over the second sidewall spacer.

6. The integrated circuit of claim **1**, wherein the second conductive feature is electrically connected to the second gate structure.

7. The integrated circuit of claim **6**, wherein the second conductive feature is electrically connected to the drain feature or the source feature.

8. The integrated circuit of claim **1**, wherein a portion of the second conductive feature is over the second gate structure.

9. An integrated circuit comprising:

a substrate comprising a source feature and a drain feature;

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- a first gate structure over a top surface of the substrate, wherein the first gate structure is between the source feature and the drain feature;
- a second gate structure over the top surface of the substrate, wherein the second gate structure is adjacent to the first gate structure and the source feature;
- an insulating layer over at least the first gate structure;
- a first conductive feature over the source feature or the drain feature, wherein a top surface of the first conductive feature is coplanar with a top surface of the insulating layer; and
- a second conductive feature over the substrate, a portion of the second conductive feature being embedded in and contacting the first conductive feature.
- 10.** The integrated circuit of claim **9** further comprising:
- a pair of first spacers on each sidewall of the first gate structure, wherein the insulating layer is embedded between the pair of first spacers on each sidewall of the first gate structure;
- a pair of second spacers on each sidewall of the second gate structure, wherein the pair of second spacers comprises:
- a first sidewall spacer; and
- a second sidewall spacer, wherein a top surface of the first sidewall spacer is not coplanar with a top surface of the second sidewall spacer.
- 11.** The integrated circuit of claim **10**, wherein the second conductive feature is over the second sidewall spacer, and wherein the second conductive feature is electrically connected to the second gate structure.
- 12.** The integrated circuit of claim **9**, wherein the first conductive feature or the second conductive feature has an L-shape.
- 13.** A device comprising:
- a substrate having a source feature and a drain feature;
- a first gate structure over a top surface of the substrate, the first gate structure being between the source feature and the drain feature;

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- a second gate structure over the top surface of the substrate, wherein the second gate structure is adjacent to the first gate structure;
- a pair of first spacers on each sidewall of the first gate structure;
- a pair of second spacers on each sidewall of the second gate structure, the pair of second spacers comprises:
- a first sidewall spacer; and
- a second sidewall spacer;
- a first insulating layer over the first gate structure;
- a second insulating layer over at least a portion of the second gate structure
- a first conductive feature over the source feature or the drain feature; and
- a second conductive feature over the substrate and the second sidewall spacer, a top surface of the first conductive feature being coplanar with a top surface of the second conductive feature.
- 14.** The device of claim **13**, wherein a top surface of the first sidewall spacer is not coplanar with a top surface of the second sidewall spacer.
- 15.** The device of claim **13**, further comprising a third conductive feature, wherein the third conductive feature is over the first gate structure.
- 16.** The device of claim **13**, wherein the first conductive feature has a tapered shape.
- 17.** The device of claim **13**, wherein the second conductive feature has an L-shape or a U-shape.
- 18.** The device of claim **13**, wherein a portion of the second conductive feature is embedded in the first conductive feature.
- 19.** The device of claim **13**, wherein the first conductive feature and the second conductive feature comprise tungsten.
- 20.** The device of claim **13**, wherein the first insulating layer comprises silicon nitride.

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